

substantially decomposed when crosslinking is carried out. Thus, the Final Rejection speculates, “there are at least some precursors that are not decomposed after curing of the crosslinked layer of Leenders et al.” and thus, the reference anticipates the claimed invention.

Applicant’s invention is directed to a lithographic printing plate precursor having an oleophilic layer containing an already crosslinked product that is a crosslinked polymer having heat decomposable groups. This polymer has already been crosslinked with a crosslinking agent and it still has unreacted heat decomposable groups. The polymer can be crosslinked during or immediately after coating, but it is not crosslinked during imaging. Thus, it is already crosslinked when the precursor is imaged, and there are unreacted heat decomposable groups still in the polymer that are needed at the time of imaging. As pointed out on page 4 (lines 16ff) of the present application, the “lipophilic layer comprises a cross-linked product (*emphasis added*) obtained by crosslinking a polymer having a thermally decomposable group on the main chain, with a cross-linker”. In addition, Applicant teaches on page 10 (lines 19ff) of the present application that crosslinking of the polymer occurs “under drying heat” after coating and prior to imaging. This is demonstrated in Example 1 (page 24, lines 4-7). If the polymer did not still contain heat decomposable groups, imaging would not be possible because these groups facilitate ablative removal of the imaged or exposed regions. Imaging is not used to crosslink the polymer in the lipophilic layer. It is already crosslinked.

Contrary to the inference in the Final Rejection, the crosslinked polymer described in Leenders et al. does not contain heat decomposable groups. If such groups once existed in the hydrophobic layer composition, they were used to crosslink it. For example, azo compounds (Col. 5, lines 1-2) are mentioned for producing free radicals for polymerization or crosslinking of the polymer or monomer reactants. Thus, the crosslinked layer in Leenders et al. is prepared using any of many conventional crosslinkable components and crosslinking agents, but the resulting product is not described as having heat decomposable groups still in the crosslinked network, as in the oleophilic layer used in the presently claimed invention.

The other mechanism for crosslinking (besides use of free radicals) is to use acids from acid precursors (Col. 3, lines 52-43). Such precursors are

described beginning in line 7 of Col. 5. It is these acid precursors that Applicant referred to in the last response. Leenders et al. teaches that they are decomposed under the influence of heat in order to achieve crosslinking. Any non-decomposed acid precursors would not be attached to the crosslinked polymer, but would be merely dispersed within the coated layer like other unreacted layer components. Such non-decomposed acid precursors would not be participating in the imaging reaction once polymer crosslinking had occurred. There is no indication, explicit or implicit, that the resulting crosslinked polymers have attached heat decomposable groups, either from free radical or acid generation, that participate in imaging as in the presently claimed invention.

To suggest that some of the free radical or acid precursors taught in Leenders et al. are attached to the crosslinked polymer and would provide an image, as in the presently claimed invention, is pure speculation and not based on any teaching in Leenders et al.

The claims dependent upon Claim 12 are also novel by virtue of the novelty of Claim 12.

For these reasons, Leenders et al. does not anticipate the presently claimed invention and the rejection under Section 102(b) should be withdrawn.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

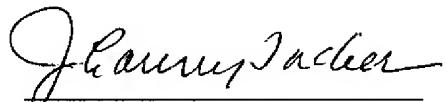
Claims 15 and 18 have been rejected as being unpatentable over Leenders et al. in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication 2002/0081529 (Sonokowa). This rejection is also respectfully traversed.

The Final Rejection argues that while Leenders et al. fails to teach the use of an IR absorbing carbon black or dye, Sonokowa supplies this missing teaching.

Applicant is not relying on the subject matter of Claims 15 and 18 for patentability. Rather, these claims are patentable by virtue of the patentability of the subject matter of basic Claim 12. Thus, the rejection should be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks,
reconsideration of this patent application is respectfully requested. A prompt and
favorable action by the examiner is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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If the Examiner is unable to reach the Applicant(s) Attorney at the telephone number provided, the
Examiner is requested to communicate with Eastman Kodak Company Patent Operations at
(585) 477-4656.